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Environment and sustainable development: implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Letter dated 26 September 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Samoa to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), I have the honour to request your assistance in circulating the attached communiqué of the Third Summit Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of AOSIS (see annex) as an official document of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 100 (f).

(*Signed*) Tuiloma Neroni **Slade**
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States

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Annex

Communiqué by the Third Summit Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the Alliance of Small Island States, issued at United Nations Headquarters on 25 September 1999

1. The Heads of State and Government of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)* met at United Nations Headquarters on 25 September 1999. The meeting was chaired by The Honourable Tuila'epa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Finance of the Independent State of Samoa, and was attended by: Mr. Leo A. Falcam, President of the Federated States of Micronesia; Mr. Carlos Veiga, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde; The Honourable Dr. Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis; Mr. Tommy Remenegesau Jr., Vice President of the Republic of Palau; The Honourable Billie Miller, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Barbados; The Honourable John Briceno, Deputy Prime Minister of Belize; and The Honourable Seymour Mullings, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica.

2. The meeting was also attended by the following heads of delegation of AOSIS member States: Mr. Souef El Amine Mohamed, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros; Dr. Rosa Elena Simeon Negrin, Minister of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba; The Honourable Clement Rohee, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guyana, Chairman of the Group of 77; The Honourable Ismail Shafeeu, Minister of Home Affairs, Housing and Environment of the Republic of Maldives; The Honourable Dr. Joe Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta; The Honourable George W. Odlum, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Saint Lucia; The Honourable Professor S. Jayakumar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore; Mr. Erroll G. Snijders, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname; The Honourable Hilda Kari, M.P., Minister of Forests, Environment and Conservation of Solomon Islands; The Honourable Clement Leo, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Vanuatu; Mr. Tu'a Taumoepeau Tupou, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Tonga; Dr. Patrick Albert Lewis, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations, Vice-Chairman of AOSIS; Mr. Maurice E. Moore, J.P., Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas to the United Nations; Mr. Simon Paul Richards, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Commonwealth of Dominica to the United Nations; Mr. Amraiya Naidu, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Fiji Islands to the United Nations; Dr. Lamuel A. Stanislaus, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Grenada to the United Nations; Mr. Pierre Lelong, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Haiti to the United Nations; Mr. Jackeo A. Relang, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to the United Nations; Mr. Anund Priyay Neewoor, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Mauritius to the United Nations; Mr. Peter D. Donigi, CBE, Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the United Nations; Mr. Claude Morel, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Seychelles to the United Nations; Mr. George Winston McKenzie, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations; Mr. Enele S. Sopoaga, High Commissioner of Tuvalu to the Republic of the Fiji Islands and Permanent Representative to the South Pacific Forum; Mr. Agiz T. Loizou, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus to the United Nations. The following attended as an observer: Dr. Carlyle Corbin Jr., Minister of State for External Affairs of the United States Virgin Islands.

3. The following special observers also attended: Mr. Nitin Desai, Under-Secretary-General, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat; and Mr. Richard Jolly, Special Adviser to the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Other attendees were: Mr. Edwin Carrington, Secretary General of the Caribbean Community; Mr. Gerald Miles, Head of Environmental Management and Planning, South Pacific Regional Environment Programme; Mr. Wayne Tamangaro King, Project Manager, Pacific Islands Climate Change Assistance Programme, South

* The member States of the Alliance of Small Island States are Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cape Verde, Comoros, Cook Islands, Cuba, Cyprus, Dominica, Fiji, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Kiribati, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Seychelles, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Suriname, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Vanuatu. The following are observers: American Samoa, Guam, Netherlands Antilles, United States Virgin Islands.

Pacific Regional Environment Programme; Dr. Russell Howorth, Programme Manager, South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission; Ms. Fay Durrant, Director of the Association of Caribbean States; Mr. Nichol Gabriel, Representative of the Commonwealth Secretariat; Mr. Taholo Kami, Manager, Small Island Developing States Network; Professor Lino Briguglio, University of Malta; and Mr. Lelei LeLaulu, Vice President, Board of Directors of Counterpart International.

4. The Heads of State and Government of AOSIS recalled that five years ago in Barbados, small island developing States and the international community spoke of the need to send a strong message to the world's peoples of the unlimited development opportunities to be achieved when pursued in partnership and with a sense of common purpose. It was agreed then that the sustainable development of island nations was both essential and achievable. They emphasized that the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was the first meaningful and concrete effort at a global alliance for the pursuit of sustainable development.

5. The Heads of State and Government of AOSIS reaffirmed that small island developing States have a strong sense of ownership of, and are deeply committed to, the principles and aims of the Programme of Action. They noted, however, that although the special circumstances of small island developing States were recognized and acknowledged at Rio de Janeiro and Barbados, little was being done at the international level today to assist small island developing States in overcoming their unique problems.

6. The Heads of State and Government of AOSIS welcomed the convening of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of the Programme of Action, which would be held on 27 and 28 September 1999 at United Nations Headquarters. They emphasized that the convening of the special session was timely and of critical importance.

7. The Heads of State and Government of AOSIS expressed concern that adequate, predictable, new and additional financial resources in support of implementation of the Programme of Action had not been provided by the international community. They also expressed concern at the overall decline in concessionary financial assistance to small island developing States, noting in particular the decline in official development assistance (ODA). They recalled that the commitment of the international community to support small island developing States made in Barbados was based on their acknowledgement that such joint action was essential for the effective implementation of the Programme of Action. They therefore called upon the international community to provide funding for the full implementation of the Programme of Action. They also urged developed countries to increase their ODA to meet the agreed United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product.

8. The Heads of State and Government of AOSIS therefore emphasized the need for the international community to assist small island developing States in advancing their sustainable development strategies, including through support for the full exploration and sustainable utilization of their limited natural resources, in particular in the areas of renewable energy, sustainable tourism development, agriculture and fisheries, coastal and marine resources, freshwater resources, and resources for the preservation of biodiversity.

9. The Heads of State and Government of AOSIS recalled that small island developing States presented over 300 project proposals for implementation within the context of the Programme of Action at a donor conference held at United Nations Headquarters in February 1999. They noted that these projects were still awaiting funding. They therefore urged the donor community to respond positively by providing funding for the implementation of these proposals, in accordance with paragraphs 91 to 95 of the Programme of Action.

10. The Heads of State and Government of AOSIS also expressed concern that the pace and terms of globalization and trade liberalization had seriously affected the economies of small island developing States, undermining their efforts to achieve sustainable development. They were particularly concerned at the serious risk of marginalization in the emerging global economic order, which their economies face in the areas of trade, investment, commodities and capital markets, despite domestic reform efforts undertaken to facilitate integration into the international economy. They emphasized the serious negative effect that the erosion of trade preferences was having on the economies of small island developing States, and reaffirmed the need for the international community to address the limitations and vulnerabilities of the economies of small island developing States through continued market access and through special and differential treatment in the international trading system. In this regard, they welcomed the progress made in the development of a vulnerability index which should be used as one of the criteria for determining special and differential treatment for small island developing States in trade, and for concessional treatment in financing and monetary matters. They also reaffirmed the importance of ensuring the full and effective participation of small island developing States in all relevant international forums, including in the multilateral

trade, financial and monetary institutions, and called for the support of the international community to assist small island developing States in that regard.

11. The Heads of State and Government of AOSIS reaffirmed their responsibility as custodians of large areas of the world's oceans, and underscored their commitment to ensuring wider protection of marine resources and ecosystems. They called for a focused and coherent approach by the United Nations system in dealing with ocean and law of the sea issues. They expressed concern at the continued use of drift-nets, and called upon the international community to ban the use, manufacture and resale of drift-nets, and to address other unsustainable fishing practices. They undertook to continue to cooperate in the further development of international maritime codes, especially as they relate to the sustainable development and management of marine resources. They also expressed support for the decision of the countries of the wider Caribbean region to recognize the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development.

12. The Heads of State and Government of AOSIS affirmed that the issue of climate change remained an urgent, principal concern for small island developing States. They expressed concern that unchecked climate change would have devastating effects on small island developing States, threatening the well-being and the very survival of island communities, and that these effects were at present being experienced in all regions. Climate change would further undermine the efforts of small island developing States to achieve sustainable development. They therefore asserted that global warming and sea-level rise should be given higher priority by the international community. They emphasized that the efforts of the developed countries to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases should be strengthened and accelerated. They also expressed the need for further international assistance for small island developing States to enable them to plan for longer-term adaptation to the effects of climate change. They noted that the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was a modest first step in the right direction but that so far only small island developing States had ratified the Protocol. They therefore urgently called upon annex I parties to the Convention to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. They also undertook to continue cooperation in the search for and promotion of adaptive solutions, through the sharing of information and consultation in relevant forums.

13. The Heads of State and Government of AOSIS expressed concern at the increasing incidence and magnitude of natural disasters and their devastating effect on the communities of small island developing States. They called for the international community to support appropriate initiatives and mechanisms for strengthening regional and national capabilities for natural disaster prevention, mitigation and rehabilitation, making early warning a key element within these efforts. They emphasized the importance of an international framework of assistance for natural disaster reduction and response, and welcomed the progress made on cooperative arrangements put in place during the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.

14. The Heads of State and Government of AOSIS also reaffirmed their opposition to the transportation of hazardous and nuclear materials through the exclusive economic zones of small island developing States, and recalled that the right to ban such movement and transportation was formally accepted in the Programme of Action. They recognized the need to pursue initiatives within the existing international legal regime in order to formally defend that right. They exhorted the international community to ensure that the principle of State responsibility is more vigorously enforced, and to ensure that the environment of small island developing States is protected from the threat of such materials and not adversely affected by pollution from these sources. They also asserted that there exists a special responsibility of the international community and the United Nations system to those people of small island developing States, who have been adversely affected and are suffering as a result of nuclear testing programmes, in giving appropriate assistance for cleaning up, disposal of or containment of radioactive contaminants, and other measures to restore their safety, productivity and well-being.

15. The Heads of State and Government of AOSIS stressed the need for further capacity-building measures in support of small island developing States, especially in areas of relevance to national sustainable development plans. They reiterated the need for the international community to play a more supportive role in assisting small island developing States in this effort. They recognized the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDSNET) as a valuable tool in capacity-building, in particular through its programmes for Internet training and the scope offered for enhanced communication and for technical cooperation among small island developing countries. They also urged the strengthening of the Small Island Developing States Unit in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. They further requested the designation of focal points for small island developing States in all United Nations agencies.

16. They noted that the directory of experts of small island developing States published by the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation Among Developing Countries of UNDP requires urgent updating and they requested that it be made available on-line, so as to enhance access to it. They also emphasized the need for improved data collection by the United Nations system on information relevant to the implementation of the Programme of Action. This should include national sustainable development statements and policies, and quantifiable and verifiable indicators. They strongly recommended that the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs be revitalized and mandated to undertake the overall coordination and facilitation of efforts to implement the Programme of Action within the United Nations system.

17. The Heads of State and Government of AOSIS expressed their gratitude to the members of the Alliance for their efforts on behalf of the member States. They expressed their thanks to the Chairman and the many officials who had worked tirelessly to accomplish the goals of AOSIS in many international negotiations. Gratitude was also expressed to AOSIS member States which had hosted meetings of experts and workshops. They encouraged the pursuit of further cooperation among AOSIS member States, and support for increased participation of the wider AOSIS membership in meetings and workshops held in AOSIS regions, especially in the fields of biodiversity, climate change, energy, international law, oceanic research, coastal zone management, tourism and resource management.

18. The Heads of State and Government of AOSIS agreed to exchange views at future meetings on the direction of their work and on the status of the Alliance, to ensure that AOSIS remains a forum to promote the shared interests of its member States and to strengthen cooperation among them.

19. The Heads of State and Government of AOSIS expressed the hope that the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly would be a catalyst for enhanced international participation and support in the implementation of the Programme of Action, and that its outcome will represent a mutual agreement on the most effective strategy to address the sustainable development needs of small island developing States. Such an agreement would have to reflect the need for continued monitoring and ongoing assessment, with a further comprehensive review of the Programme of Action in 2004.